

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 VO-03 SCA-01 FBIE-00 INSE-00 PPT-01 SY-05

/068 W

-----031500Z 110287 /43

R 031225Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2798

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

RUDKARAMEMBASSY BUCHAREST 2170

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

USMISSION USNATO

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: CSCE, PFOR, BU

SU3:: FURTHER EASING OF TOURIST TRAVEL TO BULGARIA

1. EMBASSY WAS INFORMED BY MFA MAY 3 THAT EFFECTIVE APRIL 25, 1977, GOB FURTHER EASED REGULATIONS ON TOURIST TRAVEL TO BULGARIA SO THAT "UNORGANIZED TOURISTS" (I.E., THOSE WHO VISIT BULGARIA AS INDIVIDUALS RATHER THAN AS PART OF TOUR GROUP) ARE NO LONGER OBLIGED TO EXCHANGE A MINIMUM OF \$10 PER DAY IN HARD CURRENCY. OUR INQUIRY WAS PROMPTED BY RUMORS CIRCULATING IN DIPLOMATIC CORPS HERE. OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE CHANGE HAS NOT YET BEEN PUBLISHED AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE.

2. CHANGE HAS GENERATED CONSIDERABLE CONFUSION IN BUREAU-
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CRACY AND AMNG TOURISTS. ONE RECENT VISITING AMERICAN FULBRIGHT LECTURER (AT CLUJ, ROMANIA) JOHN BALABAN, HERE AT INVITATION OF SOFIA UNIVERSITY, WAS TOLD APRIL 27 AT RUSE BORDER CROSSING POINT THAT HE NEEDED NO VISA AND WOULD NOT HAVE TO EXCHANGE CURRENCY. ON ARRIVAL AT HOTEL SOFIA, HOWEVER, BALABAN WAS INFORMED Y COULD NOT BE REGISTERED WITHOUT VISA IN HIS PASSPORT AND WAS SENT TO NATIONAL BANK

TO EXCHANGE CURRENCY. FOLLOWING PAST CUSTOM, BALABAN WAS ASKED TO EXCHANGE \$10 FOR EACH DAY HE WAS TO BE IN BULGARIA. HE WAS ALSO SOLD A VISA AND FINED A NOMINAL AMOUNT FOR ENTERING BULGARIA WITHOUT IT.

3. IN POINT OF FACT, PRICE OF HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR TOURISTS HAS INFLATED SO THAT MOST TOURISTS NECESSARILY MUST EXCHANGE MORE THAN \$10 PER DAY. EVEN BACKPACKERS AND CAMPERS PROBABLY WILL HAVE TO CHANGE MORE THAN \$10 FOR ACCOMMODATION, FOOD AND TRANSPORTATION. THUS IN PRACTICAL TERMS NOT MUCH IS CHANGED, AND THE DAILY EXCHANGE REQUIREMENTS CONTINUES IN EFFECT FOR THOSE WHO ENTER AS VISITORS RATHER THAN TOURISTS. NEVERTHELESS, GOB WILL PROBABLY WISH TO POINT TO LATEST CHANGE AS ANOTHER MEASURE ADOPTED IN CONFORMITY WITH CSCE FINAL ACT.

4. IT MAY BE SHEER COINCIDENCE, BUT DURING LAST FEW WEEKS WE HAVE NOTED MORE FOREIVERS ARE BEING PROPOSITIONED BY BULGARIANS, SOME OF WHOM DOUBTLESS REPRESENT THE AUTHORITIES, OFFERING TO CHANGE MONEY PRIVATELY. SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THIS EMBASSY, WHO DURING THEIR ENTIRE TOUR HAD NOT HAD SUCH AN EXPERIENCE, WERE APPROACHED DURING LAST WEEK ALONE. FYI: "RATE" BEING QUOTED IS THREE W TO THE DOLLAR. OFFICIALLY, GOB SELLS LEVA AT US\$1 EQUALS BL 0.96 AND SELLS DOLLARS AT BL 1.91 EQUALS US\$1. HERZ

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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